



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement in Response to the Eviction of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee from its Minsk Office

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 01, 2007

Mr. Chairman,

As the distinguished ambassador of Belarus has pointed out, the United States was informed last week of the proposed eviction of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee (BHC) from its Minsk office. We were concerned by this action as the BHC is one of the last remaining registered human rights NGOs in Belarus.

However, as we too have learned, the Presidential Administration's Property Management Office in Belarus decided to extend the BHC's lease for another year. We welcome this development and are pleased that the Belarusian government has taken this step to reverse its decision. We will continue to follow closely the situation of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, other NGOs and human rights defenders in Belarus and raise our concerns whenever we believe that their vital work is threatened. We look forward to the Belarusian government taking further positive steps toward compliance with OSCE principles and honor its commitments under the 1975 Helsinki Accord to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Thank you, Ambassador Sychov, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.